

The previous article on "Brain Shift" could use some explanation, at least in a general way. With this in mind, I have written the following piece, "Another Look at the After effects of the Near-Death Experience."

In my opinion, it is not the episode itself but the aftereffects that determine value and meaning from a near-death experience. Anyone can have a vision that seems to duplicate the scenario's imagery, but the universal pattern of changes that happen to experiencers afterward Prove that something very real and very dynamic has occurred.

From time to time, I will be adding more articles about my research of near-death states, including my papers which were published in the peer-reviewed "Journal of Near-Death Studies."

ANOTHER LOOK AT THE AFTEREFFECTS OF THE NEAR-DEATH EXPERIENCE

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Only twenty-one percent of those near-death survivors I interviewed denied the existence of aftereffects. Of these, most either reported having had a brief encounter; or, regardless of what type of episode they had, it seemed to have little or no impact on them. The rest reported significant, life-changing differences afterward (nineteen percent claimed radical turn-arounds, almost as if they had become another person). Before and after photographs can differ.

Any notion that, as a compensatory gift, some people are privileged to survive death, see heaven, and return dedicated to selfless service for all humankind, is commonly referred to in the research field as "The Myth of Amazing Grace." That's because there are both positive and negative aspects to the aftereffects. . . passing through death's door seems merely to be "Step One." Integrating the experience is the real adventure - making what was learned real and workable in everyday life. No "set of instructions " covers how to do this. Lengthy bouts with depression can occur.

PSYCHOLOGICAL AFTEREFFECTS.

I have observed that it seems to take a minimum of seven years for most experiencers to integrate the aftereffects. Although these cannot be faked, an individual can delay the onset of them or deny their existence. Seven major elements comprise the universal pattern:

Unconditional love - Experiencers perceive themselves as equally and fully loving of each and all, openly generous, excited about the potential and wonder of each person they see. Confused family members tend to regard this sudden switch in behavior as oddly threatening, as if their loved one had become aloof, unresponsive, even uncaring or unloving.

Lack of boundaries - Familiar codes of conduct can lose relevance or disappear altogether as unlimited

avenues of interest and inquiry take priority. This new frame of reference can infuse experiencers with such an accepting nature that they can and do display childlike naivete. With the fading of previous norms and standards, basic cautions and discernments can also fade.

Timelessness - Most experiencers begin to "flow" with natural shift of time, rejecting locks and schedules as they exhibit a heightened awareness of the present moment and the importance of "now." They are easily distracted and can appear "spacey" until they readjust to the demands of daily routines.

The psychic - Extrasensory perception and various types of psychic phenomena become normal and ordinary in the lives of experiencers. A person's religious beliefs do not prevent this expansion of faculties or enlargements of perceptual range. This can frighten the unprepared and be misconstrued as "the devil's work" when it is actually more akin to "gifts of the spirit."

Reality switches - Hard-driving achievers and materialists can transform into easy-going philosophers; but, by the same token, those once more relaxed or uncommitted can become energetic "movers and shakers," determined to make a difference in the world. Switches seem to depend more on what is "needed" to round out the individual's growth than on any uniform result.

The soul as self - Most come to recognize themselves as an immortal soul currently resident within material form so lessons can be learned while sojourning in the earthplane. They know they are not their body; it is a "jacket" they wear. The majority develop an interest in reincarnation, some accept it as valid.

Modes of communications - What was once foreign becomes familiar, what was once familiar becomes foreign. Rationale of any kind tends to lose its logic as experiencers begin to think more abstractly and in grandiose terms. New ways of using language, even whole new vocabularies, emerge.

Within some households, relatives are so impressed by what they witness with their loved one that they too change, making the near-death experience a "shared" event. In other families, though, the response is so negative that alienation, separation, or divorce results. The situation with children, who undergo the same aftereffects as adults, can be doubly challenging, since they lack the ability to speak up for themselves, negotiate, or seek alternatives.

Basing the degree of an individual's transformation solely on before and after contrasts can distort or mask deeper issues that may eventually undermine the best of intentions - for researchers as well as experiencers.

PHYSIOLOGICAL AFTEREFFECTS.

Not just the psyche is affected by the near-death phenomenon. A person's body and the very way life is lived undergo changes too. Mundane chores can take on surrealistic dimensions.

Briefly, here are the more typical physiological aftereffects: substantially altered energy levels, hypersensitive to light and sound, unusual sensitivity to chemicals (especially pharmaceuticals), stress easier to handle, lower blood pressure, increased intelligence, clustered thinking (as opposed to sequential), charismatic, quicker assimilation, increased allergies of various kinds, reduction in red meat consumption, "merge" easily (absorption), latent talents surface, a hunger for knowledge, synchronicity commonplace, multiple sensing (synesthesia), body clocks can reverse, more orgasmic, "inner child" issues surface, become electrical sensitives (where a person's energy field affects electricity and electronic devices --many can no longer wear watches, microphones "fight" them, etc.).

Seventy-three percent of my research base reported incidents of electrical sensitivity. To explore this further, I sent out a questionnaire that netted me some surprises - about subjective light:

85% of those who answered my questionnaire claimed to have had a scenario where at least half of the episode was filled with bright, all-consuming light.

52% said they merged into and joined as one with this light (or being of light).

80% of these people became unusually sensitive to physical light afterward.

The correlation between length of exposure to "etheric" light and the vivid spread of physiological changes afterward is more involved than at first glance. That's because respondents with shorter exposure rates (1 to 25% of their experience) had the same capacity for the full range of physical aftereffects, while some with over 50% exposure rates declared few if any such changes.

This suggests to me that it is the intensity of the light --not length of exposure-- that seems to determine the prevalence of many of the aftereffects. And this implies that the etheric or subjective light reported by so many near-death survivors may indeed be as real and powerful as it seems - and subject to measurement studies and testing.

BRAIN SHIFT.

Considering the experience, the average near-death survivor returns more intelligent and loving than before. He or she is usually able to detach from previous norms, abstract freely, envision broader perspectives for a more compassionate and positive life, access latent talents, and display (in some cases) a flowering of genius. In other words, exhibit all the elements of a brain shift [1].

Thanks to PET (positron emission tomography), science has been able to establish that original thinking utilizes a different section of the brain than mundane thinking. To quote Marcus Raichle, a researcher at Washington University: "You can essentially rearrange the brain in fifteen minutes." Since the average near-death survivor was "dead," that is to say without pulse and breath, for ten to fifteen minutes, some for hours ("walking up" in the morgue), it is fair to say that such an experience could and does have a dramatic effect on the individual and his or her brain.

Considering the aftereffects, the near-death phenomenon seems to stimulate the brain hemisphere that was not previously dominant. There is also an observable movement in the brain, structurally, toward data clustering and creative invention - as if the experiencer were developing a more synergistic type of neural network - thus advancing the potential of whole-brained behavior (less dependent on any single type of hemispheric dominance, greater flexibility and utilization of the brain itself).

Interestingly, this same type of thing, this particular pattern of aftereffects both psychological and physiological, also appears to happen to people who undergo a religious conversion, spiritual transformation, shamanic vision quest, kundalini breakthrough, some incidences of head trauma or being hit by lightning, as well as the near-death phenomenon. And I believe for the same reason. . . a brain shift.

Reportings of impactful experiences of this nature are on the rise, globally, underscoring the supposition that we may be readjusting as a species - literally at the very moment in history when the demand for more intelligent, loving people who are creative problem solvers, is increasing.

But a brain shift may not be the only goal with these experiencers.

Look again at near-death imagery.

It is well-known that electrical stimulation of the right temporal lobe (above the right ear and specifically in the Sylvian fissure [2] produces visions of God, hearing beautiful music, seeing dead friends and relatives,

even panoramic life reviews. Yet, every near-death incident I know of that had elements in it unknowable to the experiencer that could be checked, was checked, and every one of those details was verified. Those who deny this are people who refuse to acknowledge previous research.

Example: In one of my cases, a four-year-old boy drowned in his parents' backyard swimming pool. Emergency crews were called. After fifteen minutes the boy revived. (Typical of most near-death incidents, there was no brain damage.) Immediately, he spoke of meeting his little brother on The Other Side, a little brother of about two years of age yet able to converse. As the youngster was an only child, his parents rightfully assumed he was hallucinating - until the story that spilled out, specific details about Mommy's "mistake" at thirteen and her subsequent abortion, was confirmed by the chalk-white, shocked mother. No friends or family knew about the abortion, and the mother had long since forgotten it. But here was her "only" child quoting what the aborted child told him. The schism that developed between the parents over this affair led to a divorce.

It is arrogant to dismiss cases like this. Certainly, there is ample evidence to suggest that much of the imagery in near-death scenarios is "accommodation" (i.e. the appearance and age of the aborted son in the previous episode). Similarly, in every case I have investigated, if the experiencer asked what appeared to be God or a light being or an angel if that was what that heavenly host really looked like, the image would immediately dissolve into a burst of radiant light. The individual would then be told that shapes familiar to him or her were used to quell fear and anxiety, that the reality of light worlds was beyond human comprehension.

Yet, again and again, details absolutely impossible for the individual to know are seen and later verified - like descriptions of the accident or hospital room, family secrets, various observations and insights - none of which are accommodations from the temporal lobe yet most of them found interspersed throughout an archetypal storyline as old as history records.

Obviously, there is more to the human spirit than can be proven scientifically, and there is more to living than our sensory faculties define.

What we are left with, at least until we can initiate the next phase of research, a project of cross-cultural, interdisciplinarian measurement studies [3], is this extraordinary truth: near-death episodes reveal more about life than they do death, and what they reveal is an aliveness and a power above and beyond anything we can presently fathom.

If viewed objectively, there is a reoccurring theme running throughout the phenomenon's research, and that is. . . we may be programmed by our very birth to constantly and continuously grow in consciousness and in spirit. What we think are endings may be nothing more than just another beginning.

1 I develop the concept of brain shift further in my book "FUTURE MEMORY," hardcover Birch Lane Press, New York City, 1995. And, in the self-published book, "BRAIN SHIFT: USING THE NEAR-DEATH EXPERIENCE AS A THEORETICAL MODEL TO EXPLORE THE TRANSFORMATION OF CONSCIOUSNESS." This self-published book was available from me until 2011.

2 Among presentations of this material is the book "CLOSER TO THE LIGHT: LEARNING FROM THE NEAR-DEATH EXPERIENCES OF CHILDREN," by Melvin Morse, M.D. and Paul Perry. New York, NY; Villard Books, 1990.

The International Association For Near-Death Studies (IANDS) has taken it upon itself to establish just such a research project, and it is now soliciting funds from whomever wants to contribute. Send monies, American dollars please, to

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It is now time to move past superstars and media sound-bites to do the clinical, cross-cultural and interdisciplinary research needed in the field.